

## ART VERSUS NATURE.

A SCULPTOR once carved a very beautiful statue of a woman. It was, he said, to be the crowning work of his life, and he spent many months lovingly carving its delicate lines. At last it drew near completion, a few more life touches and the splendid work would be finished. The fame of this wonderful piece of sculpture soon spread abroad, and his friends flocked in to see it. Exclamations of praise and admiration were heard on all sides, and the people waited impatiently for the day when they would be bidden to see this grand work in its full entirety, the great realization of the sculptor's most ardent thought and hope.

Once more the studio was crowded, and, with eager eyes, all turned to see the great artist slowly unveiling the marvellous marble figure. For a few minutes there was silence, utter painful silence, then a low groan of horror and disappointment ran through the room, while the sculptor stood smiling and satisfied with his work. What had happened? was the man mad? Alas! yes, he must have been, for he had entrusted the final and most delicate strokes to a rough mason, who, with untrained and unskilful hands, had effaced the previous delicate workmanship; where soft graceful curves should have been, rude lines predominated; his coarse tools had utterly destroyed the lovely life-expression, and only the outline remained to show its previous beauty. The result was terrible.

And yet we little think that the rash act which we attribute to madness is done by thousands every day. But it is not practised on clay models or cold marble, would that it were! It is human lives that are thus hacked and hewn, chiselled out of their beautiful pristine forms by ignorant and inexperienced workmen. Women are the sculptors. The lovely carving is a work of Nature not Art. Surely the perfect little forms of sweet child-life they bring into the world, are worthy of more careful handling and shaping than ignorant undisciplined nurses can bestow on them. A sensitive child under their care will often have its amiable qualities rudely crushed, its sweet disposition altered and hardened, and the child's natural character thoroughly ignored. Little faculties that ought to be brought out and developed, are restrained with rough, impatient words, and the eager questionings after knowledge curbed.

If you deem the sculptor mad, why women are ten times more so, and could we have the visible proof, as in the sculptor's case, we should with amazement see our sad error, but so gradual is the work of destruction carried on, that it is only when the ruin is complete we come to the full knowledge of this great wrong, and regret, alas! too late, that we had not entrusted the finishing touches of our grand and beautiful work to more skilful and competent hands.

MAY CULVERHOUSE.

Wallington, Surrey.

## WHAT WE MAY BECOME.

[NOTE.—The writer hereof hopes that this paper will be taken for what it is—thoughts strung together, and not an attempt to improve her elders and betters.]

Six short months ago we contended that to lead our children to obedience we must ourselves be worthy of being obeyed, not acting as a rock against which a child would shrink from dashing its will, but being a character, a presence, whose atmosphere, if we may so describe it, shall draw forth and nourish, as days go by, an altogether willing submission.

What right have we, what ground, for daring to hope that we can ever be such a character, that we can ever be to others what some presences have been to us—an exaltation?

The ground of our hope is in the nature that is ours. And here we use the word "nature" not as meaning temperament, disposition or intellectual capacity, but as indicative of the deep foundation whereon all these are reared.

And what is that nature which forms our deepest depth? surely a poor, shaky groundwork at its best, riddled with weak spots, distorted by hereditary ills, by conscious wrong doing, and wrong thinking. But indeed that is not so—cannot be so, when we are, and shall for ever be, bosomed in the heart of God. Here lies our hope, and here is the potentiality of all Godlikeness, to be realized in the least, as well as in the greatest, moments of our lives.

Nor is this merely a theory, nor a happy thought, but a solid, substantial fact, as absolutely true and real as that in the acorn there lies the promise, the all but certainty of the oak—"all but"

merely because sunshine and rain, wind and warmth can alone insure its actual growth.

Have we not, over and over again, felt within us the pangs of birth into a higher life, felt the heaving, burning conviction that we might be more than we are, have we not sworn to ourselves that external circumstances shall not bind us down, shall not affect our temper of mind, shall not be allowed to clog and fetter our best capacities. Is there one of us who has not felt as if she *must* find somewhere some great force, some electric thrill that should fill her full of zeal, full of love, and a power of endurance. We look and watch and pray, so we think, but where do we look, for what do we watch, and how do we pray?

All our life is a prayer, more fervent and effectual than any we ever uttered, and our outward lives are its exact and inevitable answer.

We live, if we look deep enough, unto ourselves, and all life is then a failure. We watch diligently, but it is that we may discover exterior strength, exterior wisdom, and we never look within—never realize that, being God's children, we are, as it were, born from His heart, sent into life with His nature as our own possession; with the possibility, with the certainty if we will have it so, of becoming perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Does this seem dreamy, idealistic, not sufficiently practical? Why should it seem impossible that a child should grow like its father? Why should we think of ourselves as for ever bound to be far, far below Him, in the pattern of whose nature we are made, who breathes into us daily and hourly the breath of His life.

Is it too much for us to grasp this? that we may love our children as He loves them, teach them as He would teach them, be to them just such a friend and guide as He would most like them to have with them. But will the realization that such is our nature be sufficient to insure our being able to live accordingly? We answer that it is only as we give out that which we already have that God can give us any more, only as we lose the wretched self-absorbed existence which we call our own life, that we find life as God thinks of it—only as we yield ourselves, absolutely let ourselves go, that God can lead us to any higher existence.

Let the idea that His very self forms the deepest, the incorruptible basis of our own self, and life looks altogether different, and is henceforth a working with a certainty of success, a daily strengthening of that union with God which is the highest state, the only Heaven, which we can ever know.

B. E. F.

## “TOLD TO MYSELF YEARS AGO.”

HAVE you ever in the night, when you were half waking and half sleeping, imagined the huge ball-shaped earth was crushing you? You are but an atom compared with its immensity, and the smallest insect bears a far larger proportion to the orange upon which it happens to alight. You cry aloud for help, feeling crushed and lost, and you wake to find yourself in bed with the moonlight streaming through the uncurtained window. “That is only nightmare,” you say. True, but precisely such is the state of mind in which we find ourselves as we look out upon the world from the point of view permitted by our immediate circumstances.

The great problem of the world overwhelms us, and we fall before it with a sense of powerlessness. Sometimes the ordinary routine of our lives shuts out this questioning and we lull our souls with the fulfilment of daily duties, but the smallest circumstance will recall it to our minds, and once having gained admission it is not to be lightly put aside. From this sense of our own feebleness arises fellow-feeling or sympathy. This morning we ate our breakfast without a thought of anything beyond it. We spoke of what had happened the day before and of what we should do to-day. If we had been reminded we should have been conscious of the restlessness crushed down and hidden away within us, but for the time it was forgotten. A casual observer might have said: “Here is a light-hearted English girl, taking breakfast, and making innocent plans for the day's work. She does not brood over past, present, or future, but takes life as it comes. ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ Something sad happens and she is sorry; something pleasant occurs and she is glad. Thus may she continue her life till the end.”

Suddenly there passes the window a girl laden with tin pots, which she is trying to sell. She is very thin, and the east wind pinches her features until they look sharper than usual. Instantly the question arises within the mind of the spectator: “Why should I sit here at my ease while that girl, who is perhaps more deserving, carries that heavy basket through the wind? How dreadful I should think it if I had to do that! How all my friends would